City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 26-2679, **Agenda Item #:** 16. 11/5/2026

Posting Language
Approve an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Austin Fire Department Operating Budget Special Revenue Fund (Ordinance No. 20260812-007) to accept and appropriate $90,087 in grant funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant for Peer Support Certification training and required overtime. Funding: $90,087 is available from FEMA. A City funding match of $13,513 is required and available in the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Operating Budget of Austin Fire.

Lead Department
Austin Fire Department

Fiscal Note
Funding in the amount of $90,087 is available from FEMA. A City funding match of $13,513 is required and available in the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Operating Budget of Austin Fire.

Prior Council Action:
August 12, 2026 - Council approved Ordinance No. 20260812-007 adopting the City of Austin Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027, beginning on October 1, 2026, and ending on September 30, 2027.

For More Information:
Tom Vocke, Interim Fire Chief, 512-974-0132; Les McKay, Assistant Fire Chief, 512-974-0148.

Additional Backup Information:
The purpose of this project is to provide Peer Support Certification Training led by IAFF (International Association of Firefighters) instructors resulting in certifications of all new Peer Support Team members. In addition, this will fund overtime for continuing education classes for the full Peer Support Team.

The budget of Austin Fire will provide the required match of $13,513. The federal grant portion is $90,087. The term of the contract begins September 28, 2026, to September 27, 2028. When the grant funds expire, Austin Fire will evaluate the continued funding, and it may be denied.

The General Fund will not be required to contribute additional funds beyond those currently budgeted to this grant. When the grant funds expire, the department’s need for continuing funding will be evaluated and may be denied.

Background on the Peer Support Team
Peer support in the fire service is a program in which firefighters support one another emotionally, mentally, and psychologically through the unique challenges of the job.

Peer support connects personnel with trained peers (other firefighters) who understand the fire service culture, the pressures of emergency response, and the experiences that can be difficult to explain to people outside the profession.

What does peer support look like?

- Emotional support after difficult calls, providing a safe, nonjudgmental opportunity to talk after traumatic incidents, such as fatal fires, pediatric emergencies, line-of-duty deaths, or other distressing calls.
- Listening without judgment. A trained peer supporter listens, checks in, and helps a coworker work through stress, grief, family difficulties, burnout, or other personal challenges.
- Connecting personnel with professional help. Peer supporters can help firefighters recognize when additional support may be useful and connect them with counselors, employee assistance programs (EAPs), chaplains, or mental health professionals.
- Building a culture of trust and encouraging firefighters to talk to one another, look out for one another, and seek help without feeling ashamed or believing they must handle everything alone.

Currently, Austin Fire has 47 volunteers that provide Peer Support.

Information About the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF)

The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) is a major labor union representing full-time professional firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel across the United States and Canada.

They provide a standardized Peer Support Training program among many other types of training designed for fire service personnel, paramedics, chaplains, dispatchers, and behavioral health providers.

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